I had always been concerned about our food supplies. In an earlier chapter of these Memoirs* I have described how the steadily growing shortage of food became in the course of 1916 a serious menace, and how Lord Crawford and I urged repeatedly on the Cabinet a programme of food production and the appointment of a Food Controller to supervise distribution. For long I had been of opinion—and still am—that with improved scientific knowledge of soil fertilization and productivity and with mechanical devices we could at least double the yield of our land. I had been in touch for years with the more enlightened agriculturists of the kingdom, and my conviction was based on their experience.

How the situation was viewed by a well-informed observer is shown by the following letter, written to me by one of the foremost of them, Sir Christopher Turnor, in November, 1916, a fortnight before I became Prime Minister :—

" Stoke Rochford,
Grantham,
23rd November,
1916.

. . . The question of the home production of food is becoming so serious that I beg leave to put before you a few considerations, knowing your deep interest in English agriculture.

Our land is producing less than it did before the War, and in

Appointment of Food Controller

urged

Christopher Turnor's letter

1917 it will produce still less than in 1916.

Large areas are going out of cultivation. Before we know where we are we shall see a drop of between £300 and £400 millions in the capital

* The Food Position, Vol. II, Chapter **xxxiii**.